

## Communication Skills Checklist:

Use the following checklist to help ensure good communication with your patients.

### Initial Contact:

- Introduce yourself by name.
- Make eye contact.
- Ask the patient how they would like to be addressed. Record their preference in their chart.
- Explain what you will be doing.
- Ask the patient if they have any questions.
- Listen to and look at the patient. Nod your head to indicate you are actively listening if continuing to record information in the medical record.

### Questioning:

- Use open-ended questions whenever possible.
- Ask questions one at a time.
- Allow the patient to respond in their own terms.

### Facilitation:

- Encourage patients to continue, using phrases such as “go on.”
- Use nonverbal clues to demonstrate interest, such as nodding your head.
- Paraphrase or restate what the patient has said for clarification.
- Do not interrupt the patient.
- Acknowledge and empathize with your patient’s feelings: “You seem worried” or “I sense you are concerned.”
- Avoid paternalistic or authoritarian statements, such as “Don’t worry; you don’t need to understand what this is all about.”
- Use understandable lay language, avoiding technical medical terms.

### Summarize:

- Conclude by summarizing what occurred during the visit.
- Tell the patient when you will expect to receive test results, if applicable.
- Verify the patient understands treatment plans or instructions.
- Develop a plan with the patient for future care, if appropriate.